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National School Lunch Program

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE/ WASHINGTON, D.C.
Revised October 1976 FNS-78

Schools and residential child care institutions in the National School Lunch Program serve nutritious, low-priced lunches to children. Children from low-income families may receive lunches free or at a reduced price of no more than 20 cents. The U.S. Department of Agriculture helps provide lunches by offering cash and food assistance to participating schools and institutions.

WHAT SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

Any public or nonprofit private elementary, junior high, or high school is eligible. Also eligible are public and nonprofit private licensed residential child care institutions such as orphanages, homes for retarded children, and temporary shelters for runaway children.

Schools and institutions wishing to join the program must agree to serve lunches that meet Federal nutrition standards. They also must agree to provide free and reduced price lunches to children who cannot pay the full price.

HOW DO SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS JOIN THE PROGRAM?

Interested schools and institutions may apply directly to the agency administering the program in individual States. To obtain the name of the appropriate agency in your State, write to the Child Nutrition Division, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 20250.

WHICH CHILDREN GET FREE OR REDUCED PRICE MEALS?

By law, any child from a family meeting local standards of eligibility—based on family size and income—may receive a free or reduced price lunch if his school participates in the lunch program.

Each year participating schools and institutions send lunch program information to parents and the news media. It explains how families can apply for free and reduced price lunches. Teachers, school principals, or institution officials can provide further information.

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U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

CAN ALL CHILDREN GET LUNCH THROUGH THEIR SCHOOL'S OR INSTITUTION'S NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM?

Yes. Schools and institutions in the program must offer lunch to every child. In addition, schools cannot make a child sit alone, eat a different meal, be served from a different line, or at a different time because of race, color, national origin, or inability to pay. If a child is treated unfairly in the National School Lunch Program, his parents should send a detailed letter to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 20250.

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM?

During the 1930's, malnutrition was widespread among children in our country. To help solve this problem, the Federal government bought farm surpluses for distribution to school lunch programs. Later, money was allocated to schools in place of food. Yearly funding of school lunch programs eventually evolved into the National School Lunch Act of 1946. This Act gives permanent authorization to the National School Lunch Program and pledges to "safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's children." In October of 1975, Public Law 94-105 was passed. One of the provisions of this law expands the lunch program to include residential child care institutions.

Child Nutrition Programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture are available to all children regardless of race, sex, creed, color, or national origin.
